

Witness Name: Lord Thomas King

Statement No.: WITN5598001

Exhibits: Nil

Dated: 20/12/2022

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF LORD THOMAS KING

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 4 November 2022.

I, Lord Thomas King, will say as follows: -

1. My name is Thomas Jeremy King (the Rt Hon. The Lord King of Bridgwater CH). I was born on GRO-C 1933. My address is C/O Lord King of Bridgwater, House of Lords, London, SW1A 0PW. I make this statement pursuant to a Rule 9 request from the Inquiry dated 4 November 2022. I am a former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and I held this role from 3 September 1985 – 23 July 1989. I have not been provided with any evidential documentation to refer to, and as such, when I am responding to the Inquiry's questions throughout my witness statement, I will be drawing solely from my recollection of my experience in this role.
2. I have set out this statement following the Inquiry's section headings in the Rule 9 request.

3. I would like to begin my witness statement by making a few brief opening comments.
4. I understand why I have been contacted by the Inquiry, having been Secretary of State for Northern Ireland during relevant years. However, the serious matters that are the subject of the Inquiry occurred over 30 years ago, and I have no recollection of them ever having been brought to my attention.

Section 1: Introduction

5. I have been asked to set out my professional qualifications. I am a graduate of Emmanuel College, Cambridge and I subsequently had substantial industrial experience prior to entering Parliament.
6. The following table outlines my parliamentary career:

Table 1 – Government Posts

Date	Role
12 March 1970- 7 June 2001	Elected MP for Bridgwater
19 November 1976 – 4 May 1979	Shadow Secretary of State for Energy
6 May 1979- 5 January 1983	Minister of State for the Environment
6 January 1983 – 10 June 1983	Secretary of State for the Environment
11 June 1983 – 16 October 1983	Secretary of State for Transport
16 October 1983 – 1 September 1985	Secretary of State for Employment

3 September 1985 – 23 July 1989	Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in Northern Ireland Office
28 July 1989 – 9 April 1992	Secretary of State for Defence
1 July 1994 - 1 July 2001	Chairman of the Intelligence and Security Committee
9 July 2001- present	Appointed as Conservative party life peer in the House of Lords

7. I am asked to provide details of any business or private interests I have or have had which are relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference ("ToR"). I do not have any business or private interests relevant to the Inquiry's ToR.
8. I have been asked to set out any memberships of other committees, associations, parties, societies, or groups relevant to the Inquiry's ToR. I have no memberships of relevance to the Inquiry's ToR.
9. I have been asked to confirm whether I have provided evidence to or been involved in any inquiries, investigations or criminal or civil litigation in relation to human immunodeficiency virus ("HIV") and/or hepatitis B virus ("HBV") and/or hepatitis C virus ("HCV") infections and/or variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease ("vCJD") in blood and/or blood products. I have not been involved in any of the above.
10. I am asked to provide details of any business or private interests I have or have had which are relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference ("ToR"). I do not have any business or private interests relevant to the Inquiry's ToR.
11. I have been asked to set out any memberships of other committees, associations, parties, societies, or groups relevant to the Inquiry's ToR. I have no memberships of relevance to the Inquiry's ToR.

12. I have been asked to confirm whether I have provided evidence to or been involved in any inquiries, investigations or criminal or civil litigation in relation to human immunodeficiency virus ("HIV") and/or hepatitis B virus ("HBV") and/or hepatitis C virus ("HCV") infections and/or variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease ("vCJD") in blood and/or blood products. I have not been involved in any of the above.

Section 2: Role as Secretary of State at the Northern Ireland Office

13. My role, function, and responsibility as Secretary of State ("SoS") for Northern Ireland was to lead the Northern Ireland Office ("NIO") as a cabinet minister. I recall that my main responsibilities during this time were to combat the serious terrorist campaign that was threatening the orderly life of the people of Northern Ireland.
14. Whilst I had overall responsibility for all policy areas and activities in Northern Ireland ("NI"), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Sir Richard Needham, had oversight of the Department of Health and Social Services NI ("DHSS (NI)") and would have therefore had general responsibility for health in the NIO.
15. Therefore, I had no specific responsibility for policy relating to blood and blood products and I do not recall it ever being raised with me.
16. I am asked to identify any other ministers who had responsibility for health and/or for blood and blood products during my tenure as SoS for NI. Northern Ireland was under direct rule at the time, and responsibility for health remained with the Department of Health and Social Security until 1988 when it split to become the Department of Health ("the Department") and in Northern Ireland, DHSS (NI) as appropriate.
17. In Westminster, Lord Norman Fowler was SoS for Health from 14 September 1981 – 13 June 1987. He was succeeded by Lord John Moore from 13 June 1987 – 24 July 1988. Lord Moore was succeeded by Lord Kenneth Clarke who served as SoS from 25 July 1988 – 1 November 1990.

18. As outlined above (paragraph 14), during my time as Secretary of State, Sir Richard Needham (Earl of Kilmorey) was the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the NIO responsible for the DHSS (NI).
19. The organisational structure of the NIO was that I, as the SoS for NI, had overall responsibility for the NIO, and had various ministers and civil servants report to me namely, Ministers of State, Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State, Permanent Under-Secretaries of State.
20. The role and function of the Northern Ireland Office under direct rule from Westminster was to provide good governance for Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom.
21. In practice, I delegated full authority to the other ministers in the NIO but remained available when required if particular challenges arose.

Section 3: Decision-making structures

22. I am asked to outline my experience of how decisions were taken and requested by myself and other ministers. During my time as SoS for NI, in general I was impressed by the correct observance of procedures by NIO ministers and officials who were seeking to maintain good governance in Northern Ireland under very challenging conditions.
23. I recall the process of requesting decision making was made through written submissions to be followed, if necessary, by meetings.
24. When presenting advice to any minister, including the SoS for NI, individual departments sought to draw advice from informed outside bodies.
25. Generally, decisions about matters relating to health in the NIO fell within the responsibility of the relevant ministers who were delegated to deal with health and they worked closely with the SoS for Health in the UK government.

26. It was the responsibility of the official concerned to determine the importance of a particular matter and whether it should be brought to the attention of myself and other ministers, normally by giving an initial written submission, but in any urgent cases face to face meetings were able to be requested.
27. In general, I found the process of sharing information on key issues to be very effective during my tenure as SoS for NI.
28. The process of determining a budget for the NIO and the budget for health matters involved close consultation with the responsible officials in the NIO working closely with their opposite numbers in the Treasury in London. Subsequently, some determinations were made between myself and the Chief Secretary of the Treasury, and if further agreement was needed, it was ultimately made by the whole cabinet with the Prime Minister included.
29. The Chief Medical Officer for Northern Ireland ("CMO") during my tenure was Dr Robert Weir who served from 1978 – 1988. He was then succeeded by Dr James McKenna, who served in this role from 1988-1995. My understanding of the role of the CMO was that they had an overall responsibility for health in Northern Ireland and that they were answerable to the minister in the NIO responsible for health.
30. The CMO had a clear responsibility of playing a leading role in shaping policy and in particular ensuring ministers, clinicians, patients, and the public were informed of any risk to public health. The CMO also had clear responsibilities to issue any necessary guidance or advice to ministers, clinicians, patients or the public.
31. I have no recollection of any meetings between the CMO and NIO. The CMO would have had access whenever necessary to relevant ministers within the NIO in the discharge of his responsibilities. The agenda would have been a matter for agreement between the CMO and those involved.

32. I am asked to describe the relationship between the NIO and the Department in respect of health policy in Northern Ireland with particular reference to policy related to blood, blood products, haemophilia and other bleeding disorders, HIV/AIDS and hepatitis.
33. I do not recall any matters arising which indicated any breakdown in the relationship between the NIO and the Department in any of the areas for which they had responsibility. As outlined earlier (paragraph 15), I am not aware of any discussion about policy relating to blood or blood products, or the aforementioned infections associated with them having taken place during my tenure.
34. I am not aware of how much oversight the Department had over health policy decisions in NI, and as such cannot provide any examples.
35. I cannot recall any interaction between the NIO and the Department on matters relating to blood or blood products.
36. Generally, I believe that the NIO tried to broadly align its health policy decisions with the Department. As far as I can recall, this would have therefore also applied to blood and blood products.
37. I am unable to recall any specific interactions in relation to health policy with the Department or the Welsh and Scottish Offices relating to health policy.
38. I do not recall what role was played by the DHSS (NI) in forming, directing, and managing health policy for Northern Ireland.
39. In relation to blood and blood products, and the risk of infection from blood and blood products, I again am unaware of what role the DHSS (NI) played in forming, directing, and managing health policy for this particular area.

Section 4: Other

40. I am asked to outline to what extent the following came to my attention during my time in office:
41. I do not recall the risk of transmission of serious viruses by blood or blood products being brought to my attention.
42. I similarly have no recollection of being informed about the introduction of screening blood donations for HCV.
43. I also have no recollection of being informed about the circumstances in which people receiving NHS treatment in Northern Ireland were infected with HIV, HCV, or HBV.
44. I do not recall these issues being raised with me nor the issue of any compensation.
45. I also do not recall a discussion of whether or not an inquiry should be held into the circumstances in which people receiving NHS treatment in Northern Ireland were infected with HIV, HCV or HBV.
46. I am asked to provide my view as to whether these matters should have been brought to my attention. If their seriousness had been recognised at the time, then I would have expected them to be drawn to my attention, but I do not recall that happening.
47. Whilst I appreciate the Inquiry is properly seeking to establish all possible evidence, I apologise that I am not able to give any real help in the way of evidence on matters from so many years ago and of which I do not believe were ever drawn to my attention.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed: GRO-C

Dated: 20.12.22